
**Principles for successful collaborative
business relationship management**

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 286, *Collaborative business relationship management*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Regardless of industry or other factors, a well-conceived collaborative relationship will follow a set of common principles. Any collaborative relationship lacking in these principles will most likely experience challenges and reduce the likelihood of success.

The essence of collaborative working enables organizations to achieve greater results than working independently. Continual focus on adding value will open up the awareness and ability to make use of value-enhancing opportunities within existing and through new collaborative relationships.

A collaborative relationship underpinned by aligned visions and values, business objectives and commitment to mutual benefits can achieve synergy in areas such as reduced risk, improved performance and efficiency, extended product or service capability, product development and innovation or even improved performance through behavioural change.

The collaborative relationship management principles can be used as a lens through which to interpret and understand the requirements and guidelines for collaborative working. They were developed and updated by international experts of ISO/TC 286, which is responsible for developing and maintaining ISO's collaborative business relationship management standards.

The following document addresses those principles that underpin the implementation and operation of organizations committing to work together across organizational boundaries for mutual benefit and added value. This document provides for each principle:

- **Statement:** a description of the principle;
- **Rationale:** an explanation of why the principle is important for the organization(s);
- **Key benefits:** examples of the benefits associated with adequately addressing the principle.

The creation of effective collaborations is an iterative process where these principles will evolve through the life cycle of a relationship.

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Principles for successful collaborative business relationship management

1 Scope

This document introduces twelve collaborative relationship management principles. ISO 44001 and related ISO collaborative management standards are based on the understanding and acknowledgement of these principles.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 44001, *Collaborative business relationship management systems — Requirements and framework*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 44001 apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

4 Relationship management

Statement: A formalized process to manage and sustain collaborative relationships underpins their success.

Rationale: To be sustainable over time, a collaborative relationship needs to be based on systems and processes, whether internal or jointly developed, together with a continued focus on monitoring and developing competence and behaviours.

Key benefits: Collaborative relationships that are based solely on personal relationships, although important, are vulnerable where personnel may change over time. Documenting the process as agreed with partners ensures that leadership changes do not weaken the relationship. Furthermore, those joining the operation over time have a clear perspective on the way the relationship is to be managed, and the expectations of the parties involved.

5 Visions and values

Statement: The visions and values of organizations wanting to work together will have an impact on the effectiveness of the collaboration.

Rationale: Operating a collaborative business relationship will inevitably involve the reputation, ethics and culture of partner organizations. As each party considers the value of a collaborative relationship, the profile of the organization and potential compatibility with partners will be a key factor in establishing and aligning their capabilities and joint performance.

The nature of the relationship between partner organizations will be influenced by each party's perceptions of the other in terms of the level of effective engagement and the perceived risks and opportunities created through a more integrated relationship. This in turn will likely have a direct impact on the behaviours of the individuals involved in the collaborative venture.

Key benefits: The degree of alignment of vision and values provides guidance to stakeholders on behaviours and decisions that facilitate collaboration over and above metrics, governance and management oversight. The result is smoother operations, faster achievement of goals and higher performance.

6 Business objectives

Statement: Only when drivers for collaboration support the business objectives of each partner organization will a collaborative relationship make sense.

Rationale: Collaborative relationships can significantly enhance competitive advantage and create expanded value propositions. Such approaches will require effort and resources to achieve the desired goals and objectives of each of the partners. As such, there should be clearly defined business drivers where such investment is validated, warranted and sustainable. Implementing a collaborative relationship may require individuals and functions within organizations to undertake changes to their normal operating practices, which need to be ratified against a robust business case where collaboration is deemed fundamental to the successful achievement of the business objectives.

Key benefits: Ensuring that each partner's objectives can be achieved through the relationship will support continued effective engagement at both organizational and individual levels to sustain mutual benefit. Objectives that are clear and commonly understood across the organization engender a more efficient focus at all levels.

7 Collaborative leadership

Statement: Senior leadership responsibility and operational leadership accountability is crucial to underpin successful collaborative relationships.

Rationale: In a collaborative relationship, the more traditional command and control models of leadership would be inappropriate. Collaborative leaders embrace influence models, consensus building, leading by example and forging alignment to a shared vision. Senior management support and guidance is a crucial success factor since it creates an environment where people can work in a collaborative style.

Key benefits: The appointment of an appropriate senior executive responsible for collaborative business relationships ensures high level support in terms of oversight management and resource allocation. Their visible participation provides both focus and confidence for those directly involved in any collaboration, which in turn fosters the appropriate behaviours at all levels. It is equally important to ensure that partners have a similar level of engagement through their senior management.

8 Governance and processes

Statement: Relationships between organizations require governance structures that support collaborative decision making to ensure success.

Rationale: Management processes and accountabilities need to adapt to ensure that collaborative working (where adopted) is effective both internally and across joint activities.

For collaborative approaches to be most effective, the internal business processes and oversight should be embedded in the management systems of both organizations and harmonized. Each relationship will inevitably have a degree of individuality and the processes of the partners present potential areas of conflict and misunderstanding.

Key benefits: Effective governance of collaborative business relationships will ensure that those required to be involved will be directed and managed through a consistent operating approach. This approach can be articulated with partners and individual adaptations against existing operating practice.

The creation of a joint management process provides clarity for the individuals involved where collaborative working may require changes to existing working practices and responsibilities, which if not addressed will likely influence their performance, confidence and subsequently their level of engagement and behaviour.

9 Collaborative competence and behaviour

Statement: Establishing and developing collaborative behaviours, skills and capabilities will significantly enhance relationships between organizations.

Rationale: Fundamental to successful collaboration is the assignment of personnel with the appropriate competence and skills for collaborative working. The competences of the individuals involved will impact on their behaviours. Working in a collaborative venture can significantly challenge many individuals with the result that they do not fully engage or fail to understand the importance of their contribution and their responsibilities within the collaboration.

Key benefits: Senior management commitment to collaboration drives the level of engagement within and across organizational boundaries. Where this is supported by mentoring, coaching and perhaps also joint skills development with partners, this not only enhances competence but additionally raises the awareness of the importance of collaborative behaviours to achieve the desired outcomes.

10 Trust and commitment to mutual benefit

Statement: Trust and commitment to mutual benefit is essential for delivering to the full potential of the collaborative business relationships.

Rationale: To be sustainable over time, organizations need to ensure that the trust in the personal relationships among the individuals working in the collaborative relationship enables them to overcome conflict and adversity. This in turn builds sustainable relationships at an organizational level.

Key benefits: Confidence that each organization is also looking out for the interests of partner organization(s) and of the collaborative venture builds and sustains trust in relationships. There is much to be gained from mutual agreement that each party's success is a function of everyone's success.

11 Value creation

Statement: Value creation is at the core of any collaboration and seeking additional value beyond its initial purpose enables a more sustainable collaborative relationship.

Rationale: Collaborative operations that fail to have a focus on harnessing their joint capabilities and knowledge to seek out additional value will dilute their full potential. A significant benefit from working closely with other organizations is the ability to share ideas and develop new opportunities. At the same time, a focus on continual improvement is required to ensure the collaborative organization benefits from and adapts to change.

Key benefits: Working with partners brings added insight and as trust builds so does the opportunity to enhance working practices. The integration of a robust value creation process has the extra benefit of encouraging cross organizational interaction in addition to original agreements and supports individuals' engagement, which enhances their behaviours. Creating new value is also a clear indication that the relationship is robust and maturing.